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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Thursday, May 16, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Jelly questions are on top of the pile in today's mail. Well, in many parts of the country some preserving is already finished, especially the strawberries, and it will soon be time for other berries, currants, and cherries. Some of these early fruits bring up the question of adding pectin because they lack pectin of their own. For instance, here's a query from a woman who lives in Pennsylvania. She writes:

"I wonder if you can tell me what makes my jellies ferment? I use a pectin extract and follow directions explicitly, using standard measuring cups and spoons. Some of my fruit was picked the same day it was used. I keep jellies in a fruit closet under the front porch, which is quite cool at all times. I use wax as well as tin covers, but the jellies ferment just the same. The jellies were currant, raspberry, black and red, currant and raspberry, and grape."

Yes, jellies sometimes do ferment when a concentrated pectin is used. To keep jelly from fermenting, there must be a certain proportion of sugar in the mixture. But when a pectin extract is used, the sirup may jell very quickly--before enough of the water from the fruit juice has been boiled off. In that case, the jelly may be so diluted by the water from the fruit juice, that there isn't enough sugar (in proportion to pectin) to prevent fermentation.

Another thing: It is unnecessary to use commercial- or homemade- pectin in any of the fruit juices that contain pectin naturally. Not only do you get jelly that has more of the natural fruit flavor when you use only the pure

fruit juice, but you also get a jelly that is cooked longer and that therefore keeps better. Currant juice, for example, is very rich in pectin naturally. So also are grape and apple juices. But you do need some pectin to make jelly from cherries or strawberries.

Next jelly question: "I always have trouble making clear jelly. Can you tell me what is the reason?"

Answer: If your jelly is cloudy perhaps you don't strain your juice perfectly. Do you use a canton flannel jelly bag with the nap side in? Or two or three thicknesses of good-quality cheesecloth? You could even use a clean sugar bag. And of course you ought to have a support for the jelly bag. Do not press the bag until the dripping has almost stopped. Then clarify the juice by straining it again, without any pressure, through a fresh jelly bag wrung out of hot water. The yield may be a little lower but the jelly will be clearer.

Still another jelly question. "My jelly is often <u>too</u> stiff. Why is that?"

Stiff jelly results from using too little sugar with a fruit that is high in pectin, like apples or currants. There's a correct proportion for each fruit. Crab apples, some blackberries, red and black raspberries, gooseberries, currants, and wild grapes usually need 1 cup of sugar to one cup of juice. Other apples, some blackberries and black raspberries, Concord grapes, wild goose plums and quinces, need only three-fourths of a cup to a cup of sugar for each cup of fruit juice. (I'm going to repeat those lists.) Crab apples, some blackberries, red and black raspberries, gooseberries, currants, and wild grapes usually need 1 cup of sugar to one cup of juice. Other apples, some blackberries and black raspberries, Concord grapes, wild goose plums and quinces, need only three-fourths of a cup to a cup of sugar for each cup of fruit juice.

In the Government bulletin on jelly-making you'll find a table telling the exact proportion for each fruit. The title of the bulletin is "Home-made Jellies, Jams, and Preserves. You can get a copy free by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Soft jelly -- jelly that won't stand up and hold its shape, is another jelly trouble. The jelly experts explain this as n imperfect balance of pectin, sugar, acid, and mineral salts. This improper balance may have come about in various ways. Maybe the homemaker overcooked her jelly. If so, she destroyed so much pectin that a gummy mass was formed instead of jelly. Or she may have undercooked the mixture of juice and sugar and so failed to get jelly. Or perhaps she used too much water in extracting the juice. That would make the proportion of sugar too great for the pectin. Also if it takes a long time to evaporate the extra water some of the pectin is likely to be destroyed and the jelly won't "jell".

So much for jelly questions. There'll be plenty more of them through the season. Now for one about cooking utensils. This inquiry refers to one of those bright shiny skillets of chromium plated on copper. Says the letter-writer: "My chromium-plated skillet is beginning to wear and the copper underneath shows around the edges. Is there any harm in using it now for cooking? I have seen all-copper saucepans in old-fashioned kitchens and never thought of their being unsafe to use. But one of my friends said I ought not to use this pan."

So far as we know, if copper utensils are <u>clean</u> and <u>bright</u> when foods are cooked in them, there is no danger of poisoning. However, it is not advisable to allow foods to stand in copper utensils after the cooking is completed. And of course no one would even <u>want</u> to use a cooking pan on which vergidris had formed -- that green or bluish substance that you see sometimes on old copper. Verdigris is poisonous.

That concludes the grist of questions for today. More next week.

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